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SAADIA STUDIES

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I

ANOTHER FRAGMENT OF SAADIA'S ספר הנלוי (LIBER EXSULIS)

WHILE in Cairo in 1891, Dr. Cyrus Adler purchased a number of Hebrew and Arabic Genizah fragments of manuscripts which he has recently given to the Dropsie College. One of these fragments contains a portion of Saadia's ספר הנלוי. It should be noted at once that it is not a new portion but one already published by Harkavy¹ from another manuscript. The latter, however, was defective in many places, so that the editor had to supply the missing words or phrases by conjecture. Moreover, our fragment, as far as it goes, offers numerous variants, some of which are of considerable importance, as will be seen in the notes. Harkavy's Hebrew translation of the corresponding portion of the Arabic text is in many instances incorrect and some of his explanatory notes inadequate.² As additional material from the writings of the great Gaon is of historical and literary value, I deemed it advisable to republish the Arabic text of the fragment in question and to accompany it by a literal English translation and a few elucidating notes.

¹ *Studien und Mittheilungen*, V, 151-157.

² See Bacher's thorough review of the work in *REJ.*, XXIV (1892), 307-318.

The fragment, parchment, size 17 x 13 cm. (writing 13 x 10 cm.), consists of two leaves. Each of the four pages contains 18 lines written in a large square hand. Diacritical points are missing except on the letters ׀ and ׆. In the edition of Harkavy there are fifteen and a half lines preceding the passage with which our fragment begins and, as is evident from the content of these lines, they were very near the beginning of the book.³

Saadia had originally written the *Sefer ha-Galui* in pure biblical Hebrew imitating the Scriptures also in the outward form by dividing the content of the work into verses and providing it with accents. His antagonists used this method of his as a pretext for their attacks on the author, claiming that he did that with the purpose of giving his work the appearance, and hence the importance, of the Bible. Saadia, therefore, issued a second version of the book with an Arabic translation and an introduction in which he defends himself against the various objections made by his antagonists.⁴ Among other things he asserts that there is nothing wrong in the arranging of a book in verses and in providing it with accents and vowel-points, as this is simply a means of facilitating the reading and the understanding of the text. Moreover, many authors before him, as Ben Sira, a certain Eleazar b. 'Trai, the five sons of Mattathiah the Hasmonean, and others, have done the same, without anybody having ever objected to their method. Here our fragment begins as given below.

I should here like to call particular attention to the fourth line of our text, which may be of historical import-

³ Comp. Harkavy, *l. c.*, p. 149, n. 1.

⁴ See on the whole matter Harkavy, *l. c.*, 142 ff.; Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 1-3.

ance, as the name(?) אֶלְשָׁנוּרִי occurring there will perhaps help to identify the person referred to by Saadia. At first sight I thought of the pseudo-Messiah *Serenus*, whose name is given in various forms, also *Zonoria*, which would correspond to אֶלְשָׁנוּרִי.⁵ To my mind it is still questionable whether this pretender was a Jew at all, so that the epithet אֶלְנִצְרָאנִי would not be so much in the way of this assumption. There are, however, so many other difficulties that I would not venture anything beyond a mere suggestion. One is also tempted to read אֶלְשָׁנִירִי, meaning "the rascal" or "impostor," but the letters ו and י are very carefully distinguished throughout the fragment, which is written in an exceptionally clear hand and is well preserved. Besides, we should then expect שָׁנִיר, instead of שָׁנִירִי.

TRANSLATION

.....and as Simeon and Johanan and Jonathan and Eleazar, the sons of Mattathiah, wrote a book on what happened unto them, resembling the book of Daniel—, in the language of the Chaldeans.⁶ In this our generation the people of Kairwan⁷ composed a Hebrew book on what they

⁵ See Grätz, *Geschichte*, V (3), 401, Note 14; comp. *JQR.*, 1910, p. 210 f. Mr. B. Halper suggests to me that אֶלְשָׁנוּרִי may mean "the Babylonian," for Saadia always renders the biblical שַׁנְעַר = Babylonia, by שִׁינוֹר (comp. e. g. Gen. 10, 10; 11, 2). But aside from the missing of the י after the ש in our MS. as well as in that of Harkavy, it is not very probable that Saadia should have designated the man merely by "the Babylonian Christian," without mentioning his name. Moreover, we would then expect אֶלְנִצְרָאנִי אֶלְשִׁינוֹרִי.

⁶ According to Harkavy, *l. c.*, 205 ff., Saadia has reference to the Aramaic מִגְלַת אֲנָטִיּוֹכּוֹס, which he, like others, had ascribed to the Maccabeans; comp. Poznański, *Schechter's Saadyana*, p. 22, No. 15.

⁷ The people of Kairwān are mentioned twice more in the extant pages of the פֶּסֶק הַגְּלוּי; see Harkavy, 163, l. 8, 181, l. 10; comp. Schechter, *JQR.*, XVI, 427; Poznański, אֲנָשֵׁי קִירוֹאן, 2.

suffered at the hands of אלשנורי⁸ the Christian; it was divided into verses and provided with accents. Likewise I have composed while in 'Irāk a Hebrew book by the advice of him who was then exilarch telling therein what had come upon the nation through the aberration of Ben Meir of Palestine regarding the order of the festivals;⁹ it was divided into verses and provided with accents. Moreover I composed a book telling of the tribulations and the molestations I had encountered at the hands of some of his¹⁰ adherents; it was written in Hebrew, divided into verses and provided with vowel-points and accents, so that it might be more easily read and more readily retained. The subjects [to be discussed in] this book number ten; from each one of them the nation will derive an evident benefit. Seven of these subjects will be made clear in their respective places, while the other three will be spread throughout the whole book. It is necessary that I should indicate their contents

⁸ In שערי, which is the reading of Harkavy's text (see also *ib.*, 209-11), the ע is an erroneous combination of the letters נו, while the ד stands for ר.

⁹ Harkavy, whose manuscript was defective in this passage, supplied the words [והו' אלמסמי בכתאב אל' אעיאד] "which is entitled 'The Book of the Festivals.'" On the basis of this supplement the book is always quoted under the title ספר המועדים. But, as we see here, Harkavy's addition is not in the text and Saadia did not intend to give here the exact Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew title, which would then be סדר המועדים, but merely indicated that the book dealt with the order of the festivals. No more definite is the second passage in which he refers to the work (Harkavy, 181, l. 12), where he says אלכתאב אלדי אלפתה פי אמר אלמועדים "the book which I composed regarding the festivals." The title ספר המועדים, though very probable, is nevertheless only conjectural. For more details on this book see below p. 505 ff., Nos. 9-10. We learn here that the ס' המועדים was also written by Saadia at the request of the exilarch, as was the ספר הזכרון discussed in the following article.

¹⁰ Refers to the exilarch David b. Zakkai, with whom he was then at enmity. The book is unfortunately lost.

and the cause that induced me to the treatment of each one of them, and I say: the first one of them will be a description of learning and the indication of the way to its attainment, a characterization of the superiority of those who love it and of the inferiority of those who hate it. The cause that induced me to discuss this matter was that those people¹¹ antagonized me solely because of their hatred of learning and their desire that there should be in the nation neither learning nor justice.¹² The second chapter will contain the calculation of how many years prophecy existed in our nation, and I show that it lasted a thousand years; further [the question] after how many years the whole Mishnah was completed, and I show that this took place 500 years later;¹³ finally [I investigate] when the Talmud was finished, and [I prove] that both [Mishnah and Talmud] were uninterruptedly transmitted orally until the time of their commitment to writing.¹⁴ The cause that led me to this discussion was that I found that those who call themselves Rabbis at present are ignorant in these matters and do not walk in the path of the ancients, who live in their mouth¹⁵ and from whose [mental] food they are fed. The third chapter will give a description of what happens in a country of which an unjust person tries to assume the

¹¹ Refers again to the exilarch and his adherents mentioned before.

¹² Comp. Harkavy, p. 152, n. 7.

¹³ I. e. 500 years after the cessation of prophecy.

¹⁴ This is an important testimony showing that in his opinion the Mishnah was committed to writing in the time of the Tannaim; comp. Harkavy, 196, n. 12.

¹⁵ The word פִּי at the end of the line (l. 10) is written with a stroke on the left side of the *god*: פִּי, which makes it appear as the abbreviation of the following מִפִּיהֶם. If this be the case the sentence would offer no proper sense. It seems that Saadia made use here of the common rabbinical phrase רִבּוּתֵינוּ אֲנִי חַיִּין אֲשֶׁר מִפִּיהֶם אֲנִי חַיִּין; comp. Ketubbot 12b.

leadership. The cause that called forth this discussion was the affairs of David b. Zakkai and what happened to him. The fourth chapter¹⁶ will show that God does not leave his nation at any period without a scholar whom He inspires and enlightens, so that he [in turn] may instruct and teach her, whereby her conditions may be improved. The cause for this discussion was what I have witnessed [of His bounty]¹⁷ toward me and towards the people [through me]. The fifth [chapter] will offer interpretations of the principles of the precepts [of the Torah] and of the prophecies. I have placed these interpretations in this book side by side¹⁸ in order that the reader may [more readily] understand them. The cause for this was that [I saw]¹⁹ the urgent need of the nation for an exposition of this kind. The sixth chapter will tell of the injury and injustice and the designs upon my life that I had sustained on the part of people named therein; how I had invoked God and prayed for His help. The purpose of my stating this is that every man of probity should take example therefrom, when he is subjected to harm and injury by the wicked, so that he may remain hopeful and invoke [God], and not lose heart and hasten to join them and agree with them. The seventh chapter will present what was said [in Scripture]²⁰ by way

¹⁶ The text offers here (l. 14) ואלכאב, which is a scribal error for ואלכאב.

¹⁷ The words in brackets are added on the basis of Harkavy's text; see the variant to the passage. Saadia has here in mind God's bounty toward him in granting him wisdom, which enabled him to write so many books by which the nation, too, was benefited.

¹⁸ As the portion of the book referred to is lost, it is not quite clear what is meant here; comp. Harkavy, 160, n. 1.

¹⁹ So in Harkavy's text, p. 155, l. 8.

²⁰ That he refers to the Scriptures is evident from the passage following later, in which he resumes the enumeration of the seven special chapters in an inverted order, beginning with the seventh. In each instance, so also in the seventh, which forms the end of our fragment, he quotes verses from the

of description and exemplification concerning all those that are wicked. 'This presentation was necessary because it will serve as a deterrent to everyone who might perhaps seek wickedness like them, that he desist therefrom; nay, it will serve as such even to the wicked themselves²¹ that they may take warning and repent. This is the exposition of the seven special chapters. As to the three general points—they embrace the whole book.²² In the first place it intends to teach the nation the correct usage of the Hebrew language. For I saw that since the Arabic and the Nabatean languages have become predominant, particularly the inferior one of the two, they caused the people to forget its eloquent language and elegant expression. In the second place it purports to teach the nation the composition of speech and [how to avoid] obscurities therein. For I have made this [work] to be like a light unto the people, which they should follow and by which they shall be stirred up to a proper disposition of their discourses and of the thoughts contained therein. In the third place it is to teach the nation the proper connection of sentences, as no discourse can be fully

Bible to prove his point. Harkavy, who, as pointed out by Bacher, *REJ.*, XXIV, 314, misunderstood the entire portion in which S. announces the ten points or subjects of his book, naturally could not make out the sense of this passage, and hence his remarks on p. 154, n. 8-9.

²¹ The MS. (l. 12) has בָּרִלֶךְ, which gives no sense. It is doubtless a mistake for בָּרִלֶךְ, which is also the reading of Harkavy. The pronoun הֵם after לָהֶם is not superfluous, as Harkavy thinks, but serves as emphasis: "to them (the wicked) themselves."

²² Saadia means to say that he did not assign special paragraphs to the treatment of the three points which he calls general, for as their object is to teach correctness of expression, proper construction, and logical connection of sentences, no such treatment was necessary. His whole book, which complies with these three demands, will serve as a model to the reader, or, as Saadia expresses himself in the following, as a light to guide him in his compositions.

intelligible unless by interdependence of sentences, which holds together the parts of the speech. It is thus that the sense becomes clear, otherwise it is vitiated and diverted. I have elucidated these three points also in the "Book on Hebrew Poetry."²³ I have expressed therein my sorrow over the nation's neglect of the language and made clear the benefits of proper order and connection.²⁴ Much of this matter I have, likewise, explained in the "Twelve Parts" [of a book],²⁵ which I have composed for the purpose of elucidating the grammar of the Hebrew language. When the nation reads this book and when its youth will study it, it will derive therefrom these ten²⁶ benefits: it will acquire

²³ This is the book known under the title "Agron," Saadia's first literary production, of which again only parts of the Arabic and Hebrew introduction were preserved in the Genizah and published by Harkavy, *l. c.*, 41-57; comp. Bacher, *REJ.*, XXIV, 307 f.

²⁴ The passage to which he refers here occurs in the portion preserved; see Harkavy, 54 f.; comp. also p. 45, and Bacher, *Die Anfänge der hebräischen Grammatik*, Leipzig 1895, p. 60.

²⁵ This Book is often quoted by Saadia under the title כתב אללגה "Books on the Language." It was *one* book in twelve parts, which he sometimes designates as separate books. In our passage he more properly refers to them as parts. Of this work nothing has come to us, but various particulars about it found in Saadia's other works, as well as in those of later authors, made it possible for Professor Bacher to give a full description of its original plan and arrangement, as well as of its content; comp. Bacher, *REJ.*, XXIV, 310 f., and especially *Anfänge*, 38-60.

²⁶ Harkavy's text, followed by Bacher, *REJ.*, XXIV, 315, top, has 'אלג, "the three," which refers only to the three general purposes of the book. Our text offers, however, the correct reading, for, as pointed out before (note 20), Saadia here again takes up the enumeration of the ten points, which he desires to bring out in the present work, briefly summarizing the three general objects, to which he finds allusions in the verses from Isaiah and Job, and then giving in inverted order the seven special topics (beginning וַאֲנִי תִּבְרַת, l. 15). This reading is supported by a later passage (Harkavy, 161 ll. 12-14), where, upon having recapitulated all points, he says: וְאֵל קָר

.. עֲדַרְתָּ הִזָּה אֵלַי אֲבוֹאֵב וְכִשְׁפַּת עֵן מִנִּמְצָעָהּ מִן אֲכֻרָהּ אֵלַי אֲוִלָּהּ.. "Now as I have recounted the ten points and shown their usefulness from the last

elegance in the use of the language, a correct method of disposition, and the proper connection. Thus will be fulfilled the words of Isaiah:²⁷ The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly; as said also Elihu:²⁸ My words shall utter the uprightness of my heart and that which my lips know they shall speak sincerely. The nation will further derive a lesson from what was said therein regarding the wicked and what was recorded concerning them for future generations, so that it desist from acting like them, as David said:²⁹ So they shall be made to stumble, their own tongue being against them, etc. and all men shall fear,³⁰ etc. Job also said:³¹ Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the godless.

of them back to the first" and so forth. It may be observed that in counting backward he placed the fifth point (Harkavy, 155, l. 6-9), either by mistake or for some reason, between the third and the second points (Harkavy, 159, l. 20-23).

²⁷ Isaiah 32, 4.

²⁸ Job 33, 3.

²⁹ Ps., 64, 9.

³⁰ *Ib.*, 64, 10.

³¹ Job 17, 8.

(Leaf I recto)

- 1 ושמעון ויונתן ויונתן ואלעזר בני מתתיה כתאבא
- 2 פי מא מר בהם ישבה כתאב דניאל בלגא אלכסדאניין.
- 3 ופי עצרנא הדא אלה אהל אלקירואן כתאבא
- 4 עבראניא פי מא נאלהם מן אלשנורי אלנצראני מפסקא
- 5 פואסיקא מטעמא בטעמין. וכמא אלפת ואנא
- 6 באלעראק כתאבא עבראניא ען ראי מן כאן באלחטרה
- 7 רייסא פי מא ורד עלי אלמאמא מן בטא בן מאיר
- 8 באלשאם פי תרתיב אלאעיארד מקטעא פואסיקא
- 9 מטעמא בטעמין. וכדלך אלפת כתאבא פי מא
- 10 לקיתה מן קום מן אהלה מן אלמחן ואלגהד עבר[א]ניא
- 11 מפסקא פואסיקא מסמנא מטעמא ליכון אסהל לקראתה
- 12 ואמכן לחפטה. ואנראין הדא אלכתאב עשרה
- 13 כל ואחד מנהא תנתפע בה אלמאמא נפעא ביינא
- 14 פמנהא סבעה תבין מוצעא מוצעא מנה ואלתלאהא
- 15 אלאוכר (sic) שאיעה פי גמיעה. וינבני אן אדכר
- 16 עיונהא ואלסבב אלדי דעא אלי אתבאת כל ואחד
- 17 מנהא ואקול[אן] אלאול מנהא צפה אלחכמה וכיה
- 18 וגראנהא ופצאיל מחביהא ונקאין באנציהא וכאן

מפסק H | אלשנורי for שערי H | נאלהם for להם H | אלפי H(arkavy) 3 |
 5 H | מטעם 6 | ט in the last word of the line stands for צ, which is in H |
 7 רייסא missing in H, but suppllied by him conjecturally, so in several
 instances marked in the following as missing in H | 8 First three words
 missing in H, who conjectures בכתאב והו אלמסמי בכתאב; see note 9 | H אעיארד |
 9 H | כדלך 9 | 13 Here as in line 7 אלאומה with ו as *mater lectionis*, but then
 crossed out and *dagesh* added in the following מ H | בינא; see note on תבין
 in next line | 14 סבעה is margin; text 2 | For תבין H reads תלך! The
 doubling of the *yod* is to indicate consonantal reading | 17 The words אן
 ואקול are omitted by H, but they fell out only through homoiotele-
 euton (מנהא), and in fact, the first three words are found also on the
 margin of MS. H from which אן, missing in our MS., is supplied; see H's
 note *ad locum* | 18 H וגראנהא.

1	אֶלְסֶבֶב פִּי אֲתֵבֶאֱת דְּלֶךְ לֹאן אֶלְאִיךְ אֶלְנֵאם אֲנֵמֵא
2	עֲדֹדוּנִי לְשִׁנְאָתָהֶם לְלִחְכֻמָּהּ וּקְצֵרָהֶם אֵלֵא יִכּוֹן פִּי
3	מֵא בֵּין אֶלְאוּמָהּ (sic) עֵלֶם וְלֹא עֵדֵל . וְאֶלְבֵּאב אֵלֵב
4	תֹּאדִיךְ אֶלְסִנִּין כֵּם אֶקֱאֵמֵת אֶלְנִבֹּהֶּּ פִּי מֵא בֵּין אֻמְתֵּנֵא (sic)
5	פִּבִּינֵת אִנְהֵא אֶלֶף סִנָּה וְאֵלִי כֵם סִנָּה אֶסְתֵּתֵם גְּמִיעַ
6	אֶלְמִשְׁנֵה פִּעְרַפֵּת אִנְהֵא אֵלִי כִּמְסֵּמ מֵאִיֶּה סִנָּה בְּעַד דְּלֶךְ וְאֵלִי כֵם
7	אֶסְתַּכְמַּל אֶתְלַמְדֹּר וְאֵן אֶלְגְּמִיעַ לֵם יוֹ[א]לֵא מִנְקוּלִין אֵלִי
8	וּקֵת אֲתֵבֶאֱתֵהֵא . וְאֶלְסֶבֶב אֶלְדִּי דְּעֵא אֵלִי דְּלֶךְ אִנִּי
9	וְגֵדֵת אֶלְמִתְסִמִּין בֵּאֶסְמֵא אֶרְבּוּנִין אֶלָּאן לֹא יִקְפוּן עֵלִי
10	דְּלֶךְ וְלֹא יִסִּירֹן בְּסִירָהּ אֶלְאוּאִיל אֶלְדִּי יַעֲיִשׁוּן פִּי
11	פִּיהֵם וּמִן מְעֵאִישֵׁהֶם יִרְתּוּסוּן . וְאֶלְבֵּאב אֶלְתֵּלֵת
12	תַּעֲרִיף מֵא יִחְדֵּת פִּי אֶלְבֵּלֶאֶר אֹדֵא טֵלֵב אֶלְאֵנְסֵאן
13	אֶלְגֵּאִיר אֶתְתְּרוּס עֵלִיהֵא וְאֶלְסֶבֶב אֶלְדִּי דְּעֵא אֵלִי דְּלֶךְ אֻמּוֹר
14	דֹּאדֹר בֶּן זֻכַּאי וּמֵא גְרִי עֵלִיהֵא . וְאֶלְבֵּאב אֶרְאֲבַעַ
15	תַּעֲרִיף אֵן אֶלֶּהֶּ לֹא יִכְלִי אִמְתֵּה מִן תִּלְמִיד פִּי כֵּל
16	עֵצֵר יַעֲלֵמֵה וְיִבְצֹרֵה חֲתִי יִפְתִּיהֵא וְיַעֲלֵמֵהֵא וְתִנְצֵלֵה
17	בֵּה אֲחֻאֲלֵהֵא וְאֶלְסֶבֶב פִּי דְּלֶךְ מֵא שִׁאֲהֲרֵתֵה פִּי
18	נַפְסִי עֵלִי וְעֵלִיהֵא . וְאֶלְכֵּאֶמֶס שְׁרוּחַ עֵיוֹן מִן

¹⁻² H אֱלֹהִים עָנְדוּנוּ | 4 אַן אֲלוֹאִיךְ אֵלֶּמֶס missing in H | 5 For
כִּי see preceding page line 14, note on תְּבִינָה | 6 לְמַם מֵאַחַר is margin; text
and H תִּקְ סָה' missing in H | 10 H correctly אֲלוֹי | 14 The last two letters
of זֻכַּאי and following three words are missing in H | MS. וְאַלְטָבּ וְאוֹלְטָבּ
see note 16 | 16 H יִפְתִּי [הַ] | 17 פִּי missing in H | 18 In H נִפְסִי is followed
by מִמָּא תַפְצֵל בָּהּ ; see note 17 | H וְאוֹלְטָבּ אֵלֶּמֶס מֵן missing in H.

(Leaf 2 recto)

- 1 אלמצות ואלעתידות אורדתהא הדא אלכתאב בוצלה
- 2 יקף עליהא מן יקראה ואלסבב פי דלך אן [ראית] שדח חאנח
- 3 אלאמה אלי מתלהא . ואלבאב אלסאדס חכאיה
- 4 מא גרי עלי מן אלקום אלמסמאין (sic) פיה מן אלאדא ואלתעדרי
- 5 וטלב אלנפס ומא כונת (sic) אדעו אלי אללה ואסתגית אליה .
- 6 ואלסבב פי אתבאתי דלך לימתתלה כל צאחב
- 7 חק ירד עליה אדא וגהד מן אלטאלמין פיצבר וידעו ולא
- 8 יצנר פיסארע אלי מכאלטתהם ומואפקתהם . ואלבאב
- 9 אלסאבע מא קיף מן אלוצה ואלאמתאל פי כל ואחד מן
- 10 האולי אלטאלמין אוגב אתבאת דלך כונה רדעה לכל
- 11 מן עסאה אן יקצד אלטלם מתלהם פלא יפעל כל כונה
- 12 כדלך להם הם אנפסהם לעלהם אן ירתדעון פיתובון
- 13 פהדה שרוח אלו' אבואב אלכאצה . ואמא אלהל[א]ת
- 14 אבואב אלעאמה פהי שאמלה לגמיע אלכתאב אלאול
- 15 מנהא תעלים אלאמה פציה כלאם אלעבראני לאני ראיתה[א]
- 16 מר גלבת עליהא אללגה אלערביה ואלנבטיה בל אלדני מנהמא
- 17 אנסוהא גתהא אלפציהה וכלאמהא אלבדיע .
- 18 ואלתאני תעלים אלאמה תאליף אלכלאם וגבסה

! 19 see note | H; is supplied from text of MS., missing in our 2 ראית
 ; בדלך ! 12 MS. | H 7 | אליה for בה H 5 | אלאדי H 4
 | H 13 In H עיון is added | H correctly 'ירתרעו' in the subjunctive see note 21
 | H 16 מר for מנד H 15 | אלכלאם H 15 | שרוח after
 | H 18 | כלאלה לסבב תנ and מנהמא of the following word missing in H, for which he conjectures
 . וגמעה H 18 | כלאלה לסבב תנ

(Leaf 2 verso)

- 1 אד געלט הדא כאלסראנ יחדון חדוה ויתנבהון בה עלי
- 2 נטאם כטאבהם ומעאניהם . ואלתאלת תעלמהא
- 3 אלצמאת אד כאן כל כלאם לא תכמל מערפתה אלא
- 4 בצמאת מגמעה פי אלקול בעץ אלי בעץ חתי תצה בולך
- 5 אלמעאני ואלא פסרת ותגיירת וכמא שרחת הדא אלג'
- 6 מעאני פי כתאב אלשער אלעבראני . פתוגעת פיה
- 7 לנסיאן אלאמה אללגה וביינת פיה מנאפע אלנטאם
- 8 ואלצמאת . וכמא שרחת כחירא מן דלך איצא
- 9 פי אליב אלגוז אלתי אלפתהא לתצחיה אעראב לגה
- 10 אלעבראניין פאדא קראת אלאמה הדא אלכתאב
- 11 ותעלמה שבאבהא אנתפעת בהדה אלי מנאפע
- 12 תפצחת פי אללגה ונטאמהא וצמאתהא וכאן פי
- 13 דלך כק ישעיהו ולבב נמהרים יבין לדעת ולשון
- 14 על[נים] תמ[הר] לד[בר] צח[ות] וכק אליהוא יושר לבי אמרי ודעת
- 15 שפתי ברור מלא . ואעתברת ממה דכרו אלטאלמין
- 16 בה ודון פיהם ללאניאל ואנתחת ען פעל מתלהם וכק
- 17 דויד ויכשילוהו עלימו לשונם וג וייראו כל אדם וג
- 18 וקאל איוב ישומו ישרים על זאת ונקי על חנה יתעורר.

1 תגמעה H | 4 H אלנטימה is conjectured | 4 H missing in H, for which
 5-7 For ותגיירת and וביינת see leaf 1 recto, note on line 14 | 9 H אלגז | 11 H
 כ. ק H | 16 H דכר | 15 H אלמנאפע | H אלג' for אלי; see note 26 | H ותעלמה

II

THE DOCUMENTS ON THE BEN MEIR CONTROVERSY

Altogether there exist at present twelve documents relating to the controversy of the Babylonian authorities, preeminently Saadia, on the one side and Ben Meir on the other. All of these documents are more or less fragmentary. Some were patched together from separate leaves, partly doublets, found in different libraries, whither they had been brought from the Genizah, then published and republished sporadically by various scholars in several periodicals and separate editions, often with French or English translations and annotations, all within the last twenty years.

There is much uncertainty as to the chronological order or even the identity of these documents. This is due to their mutilated condition, as the beginnings and the ends, where the dates and the names of the authors are to be expected, have suffered most or are missing altogether. So much, however, seems certain, that all but one (No. 12, perhaps also No. 10) originated during the years 921-22 of the common era. In the following I try to give a brief description of each document and to arrange them in their approximate chronological order, using in particular the texts published in Bornstein's *מחלקת רב סעדיה נאון וכן מאיר*, Warsaw 1904, pp. 45-102.

1. A letter of the Babylonian authorities, including Saadia, addressed to Ben Meir at the beginning of the quarrel, subsequent to Saadia's return from Aleppo to Bagdad shortly before the high Holidays of the year 4682 (= 921). If it is true that Ben Meir issued his first proclamation on the Mount of Olives on Hosha'na Rabbah

of that year, as is claimed by Epstein, *Ha-Goren*, V, 137, we might assume that this proclamation was the cause of the letter under consideration and that it was written as soon the news of Ben Meir's procedure reached Babylon. However, Epstein's assumption is subject to doubt, as such a proclamation by Ben Meir is not clearly stated in the sources and the various passages that come into consideration can also be referred to the proclamation by one of Ben Meir's sons, which took place about three months later. Moreover, to judge from the highly respectful and friendly tone in which the writers of this letter address themselves to their opponent, especially when compared with the style of their subsequent letters to him, it is hard to believe that Ben Meir had already taken his first decisive step by officially proclaiming his reforms. I am therefore of the opinion that if there was such a proclamation on Hosh'a'na Rabbah, as appears from the phrase הַכְרֹזָה הַרְוּיָתִים (Bornstein, 91, bottom, 92, top) this letter was written prior to that event after the first meeting Saadia had with the authorities upon his return to Bagdad. This finds some support in a passage of Saadia's second letter to his pupils in Egypt, where he says: וּשְׁבַחְתִּי אֲנִי וְיִרְדְּתִי בְנִדָּר וְהִיִּיתִי סָבוּר כִּי קִבַּל עַד אֲשֶׁר בָּאָה הַשְּׁמוּעָה בְּבִנְדָּר כִּי הַכְרִיזוּ חֲסִרִין. The wording indicates that some time elapsed between his arrival in Bagdad and the reaching there of the news of *Ben Meir's* proclamation. The word הַכְרִיזוּ, which occurs twice in that letter, as well as הַכְרֹזָה (Bornstein, 62, l. 30; comp. 93, l. 15) is in favor of Epstein's view, though it is not impossible that the writers had in mind the proclamation of Ben Meir's son. At any rate the letter in question was written before the month of *Tebet* 4682, when the proclamation of the son took place, and is therefore the *first* and not, as

Epstein (*ib.*, p. 140) thinks, the *third* letter of the Babylonian Geonim to Ben Meir; comp. S. Eppenstein, *MGWJ.*, 1910, p. 456, n. 3.

The letter of which beginning and end are missing was first published by Schechter in the *JQR.*, XIV, 52, and in *Saadyana*, 16-19, later reprinted by Bornstein in the Memorial volume for Sokolow (ספר היובל, p. 87 ff.) and in the separate edition, Warsaw 1904, p. 73-77. In the following I shall quote only from the separate edition.

2. The conclusion of a letter by the Babylonians addressed to Ben Meir, dated Tebet 1233 of the Selucidan era (= 4682 Jewish era). The fragment counts but 10 lines and contains only blessings and good wishes for the Palestinians. Eppenstein, *l. c.*, suggests that it might be the end of the preceding number. Whatever the case may be, this fragment, too, on account of its conciliatory tone, must be assigned to the time preceding the proclamation by the son of Ben Meir within the same month. It was first printed by Harkavy, *Zikkaron*, V, 213, then with variations by M. Friedlaender, *JQR.*, V, 197, by Epstein, *REJ.*, XLII (1901), 179, and by Bornstein, 45; comp. Epstein, *Ha-Goren*, V, 137, note 1. According to him it is the conclusion of the first letter of the Geonim, which he considers lost, but, as we have seen above (No. 1), without ground.

3. The reply of Ben Meir to the first letter of the Geonim, written after the proclamation of his son, to which he refers (Bornstein, 51, line 10), thus either in the latter part of Tebet or in Shebat 4682. It was published first by Harkavy, *Zikkaron*, V, 213-220 from a MS. counting 6 leaves (copied for him by Neubauer) and two additional leaves which he found in the library of St. Petersburg. M. Friedlaender reedited the Oxford MS. with

various omissions and corrections in the *JQR.*, V, 197 ff. Later two more pages, partly corresponding with the text of Harkavy and partly completing it, were brought to Cambridge by Schechter. One of these was published by Israel Lévi, *REJ.*, XL, (1900), 262, the other by Schechter, *JQR.*, XIV (1901), 42, and in Saadyana (1903), 15. All these finds notwithstanding the letter is still incomplete, a fact overlooked by Eppenstein, *l. c.*, p. 453. In 1901 A. Epstein reedited the whole text (with the exception of the portion published by Schechter) with an elaborate introduction and copious notes in the *REJ.*, XLII, 180-87. He also added a French translation of nearly the whole text (*ib.*, p. 187-91). Finally H. J. Bornstein, using all the material collected by his predecessors, published the letter in his work on the controversy, p. 45-56, with partly different readings and interpretations.

4. The letter of Saadia to his pupils in Egypt. There is no reference in this letter to a proclamation of either Ben Meir or his son. It has been proved, however, on other grounds that it was written either in Tebet or in Shebat of the year 4682 (beginning of 922 common era), thus coinciding in time with the letter of Ben Meir discussed in the preceding number. The exact date cannot be determined and the letter might perhaps as well be placed before that of Ben Meir. It was first published by Schechter from a MS. of Mayer Sulzberger, *JQR.*, XIV (1901), 59 (*Saadyana*, 24-26), and subsequently by Bornstein, 67-69.

5. Saadia's second letter to his pupils, written two months after his first letter to the same pupils, as he states explicitly therein. It was published by Neubauer, *JQR.*, IX (1897), 37; Harkavy in *Ha-Goren*, II (1900), 98; with

French translation and notes by Epstein, *REJ.*, XLII (1901), 200-203, and finally by Bornstein, 69-71.

6. Ben Meir's second letter in refutation of the view of the Babylonian authorities. From the content of this letter it is evident that things were running against him and that he had suffered some defeat, though he was not yet ready to give in. Contrary to his expectations even some of his former friends celebrated Passover of that year (4682) in accordance with the accepted calendar (comp. the passage in Bornstein, p. 92, line 9: **ואם עשיתם בניסן בשננה** : **אל תעשו בתשרי בודן**). Probably this was the case with an overwhelming majority of the congregations. It is therefore safe to assume that the letter was written not long after Passover.

The letter was published by Schechter, *JQR.*, XIV (1901), 56, *Saadyana* (1903), 20-22; Bornstein, 90-93.

7. A fragment disputing the right of the Babylonians to fix the calendar, published by Schechter, *JQR.*, XIV (1902), 249, *Saadyana*, 131; Bornstein, 94. Bornstein, *l. c.*, suggests that this fragment formed a part of Ben Meir's second letter discussed before (No. 6). This is also the opinion of Epstein, *Ha-Goren*, V (1906), 139.

8. A letter against Ben Meir by some unnamed scholar, who, as Bornstein (p. 78; comp. Epstein, *Ha-Goren*, V, 141, n. 2) pointed out, was not a Babylonian. The author, addressing himself to Ben Meir, uses a phrase that occurs in Ben Meir's second letter (the passage quoted above in No. 6), turning the same against him and his followers, thus making it certain that he wrote during the same summer, probably soon after the appearance of Ben Meir's epistle. It consists of three leaves which were found and published at different times, the third leaf by

Israel Lévi, *REJ.*, XLI (1900), 229-32, reedited by Epstein, *REJ.*, XLII (1901), 197-200, the second by Schechter, *JQR.*, XIV (1901), 62-3 (reprinted in *Saadyana*, 1903, p., 26-8), and the first by the same in *Saadyana*, 19. The three parts were then arranged in their consecutive order and reedited with explanatory notes by Bornstein (1904), 78-89.

9. A fragment dealing with the differences between the "Four Gates" of the accepted calendar and those introduced by Ben Meir. There is not the least doubt that Saadia is the author of this fragment, as various phrases and even a whole portion of it agree almost literally with passages occurring in the remnants of the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*; comp. the phrase in Bornstein, p. 64, line 18 and p. 102, line 3, as also the passages following there on p. 65 and 102, respectively. The question is only as to the chronological place of this fragment within the controversial literature. Bornstein, p. 99, suggests that it may have been part of the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* or an appendix thereto. Epstein, however, in *Ha-Goren*, V, 140, though recognizing the authorship of Saadia, is of the opinion that it represents a letter of the Babylonian authorities to the Jewish communities. If that be the case we would have to assume that Saadia was charged even with the composition of the official letters of the Geonim, which is not very probable. Besides, the words (p. 102): לכתוב את הספר הזה להיותו לזכרון: בתוך כל ישראל להודיעם את מעשה בן מאיר הזה מתחלה ועד סוף do not seem to refer to a letter, but, just as the parallel passage (p. 65), to some memorial volume that was intended for the Jewry in general. To such a ספר זכרון ומנלה Saadia refers also in an Arabic letter published by Hirschfeld, *JQR.*, XVI (1904), 296, *fol. 2 verso*, line 4-5, and it is therefore probable that we have here a fragment

of that memorial volume. This is suggested also by Eppenstein (*MGWJ.*, 1910, p. 458, n. 3), but he overlooks the authorship of Saadia. There is only this difficulty that in the letter referred to Saadia speaks of the book as having been written by the exilarch, while, as pointed out before, the fragment indicates Saadia as the author. We may assume, however, in this instance, that Saadia wrote the book by request of the exilarch and in his name, so as to give it more weight and authority, and, therefore, in referring to it had to designate it as the work of the exilarch. After all, it was not a question who was the writer of a document, but what purpose it was intended to serve. The description Saadia gives there of the ספר זכרון, as dealing with the Four Gates contrived by Ben Meir, tallies very well with the content of our fragment. I am therefore of the opinion, that the *Sefer Zikkaron* mentioned by Saadia in one of the fragments of the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* (Bornstein, 65) is not another name for the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* itself, as has been hitherto accepted (Epstein, *Ha-Goren*, V, 140, Eppenstein, *MGWJ.*, 1910, p. 457), but is the name of another book, of which our fragment formed a part. Moreover, it was not the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*, which was to be read in public on the twentieth of Elul, as generally assumed, but the *Sefer Zikkaron* mentioned therein. There is no basis for the assumption that the *Sefer Zikkaron* is identical with the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*, nor that the latter was intended for public recitation. Judging from the style of the extant fragments of the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* it would, indeed, seem very strange, that such a book should have been destined to be read in public, as it could hardly serve the purpose. The passages on which this view was based, were simply misunderstood because of the erroneous identi-

fication of the two books. It should be noticed that in the fragments of the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* (Bornstein, p. 65) Saadia reports that it was decided to write *a* *Sefer Zikkaron* for future generations (נכתוב ספר זכרון לדורותינו אחרינו), which agrees with ספר זכרון ומגלה לדורות in the letter published by Hirschfeld, while in the fragment of the *Sefer Zikkaron* (Bornstein, p. 102) he says that it was decided to write *this* book as a memorandum for all Israel (לכתוב את). (הספר הזה להיותו לזכרון בתוך כל ישראל). This distinction between the two books relieves us also of the difficulty that Saadia should have repeated his report in nearly the same words in one and the same book. The *Sefer Zikkaron* was written first, at the request of the exilarch, when all other efforts against Ben Meir had failed, and was finished before Elul 4682, while the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*, which mentions the former, may have been written at any subsequent time, but probably soon afterwards. As Saadia informs us in his סי הגלוי (see above, p. 496, l. 6) he wrote the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* also by request of the exilarch.

The fragment of the *Sefer Zikkaron* was published by Schechter, *JQR.*, XIV (1902), 498-500 (*Saadyana*, 128-30), and by Bornstein, 99-102.

10. Three fragments of Saadia's *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*, written probably when the struggle, as far as we know it, was over, 4682-83; see above No. 9. One of the fragments (counted by Bornstein as No. II) was published with a French translation by Elkan N. Adler and J. Broyde, *REJ.*, XLI (1900), 224-29, later retranslated and reedited with additional notes by A. Epstein, *REJ.*, XLII (1901), 191-97. Subsequently the fragment was completed by two leaves discovered by Schechter, which partly overlap one another as well as the text previously published. The two additional

leaves were published by Schechter, *JQR.*, XIV (1901), 49-52 (reprinted in *Saadyana*, 10-13).

Fragment No. I was published by Schechter, *JQR.*, XIV, 47-8 (*Saadyana*, 8-9), and fragment No. III by the same, *ib.*, p. 52 (*Saadyana*, 13-14). The whole was later reedited by Bornstein, 58-67. For another fragment of the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*, in which, however, the controversy is not explicitly mentioned, see Harkavy, *Zikkaron*, V, 220; comp. Hirschfeld, *JQR.*, XVI, 291, n. 1.

11. An Arabic letter of Saadia to three Rabbis in Egypt in answer to their inquiries regarding the calculations of Ben Meir, which they had accepted by mistake, celebrating the festivals accordingly. Saadia enlightened them on the situation and admonished them to read for themselves and to others the Letter of Reproof and Warning (כתאב תוכחה ואזהרה) of the Head of the Academy, copies of which he sent them together with those of the *Sefer Zikkaron* of the exilarch (see above No. 9). This interesting letter is dated "Friday, the 11th of Tebet." The year is not given, but no doubt it is 4683. The letter was published with an English translation by Hirschfeld, *JQR.*, XVI (1904), 290-97; comp. D. Yellin's *Notes* thereon, *ib.*, p. 772-75.

12. A list of the differences between the respective calculations of Saadia and Ben Meir regarding the appointment of the festivals during the years 4682-84. According to Epstein (*Ha-Goren*, V, 141) the author of this list lived in Egypt after the death of Saadia, for he adds the eulogy לברכה זכרנו to Saadia's name. He also speaks of Saadia as "the Gaon" and "the Head of the Academy," which, as we know, he was only several years after the quarrel. The list was published first by Schechter, *JQR.*, XIV (1901), 59 (*Saadyana*, 22-3), later reedited with a French transla-

tion by Epstein, *REJ.*, XLIV (1902), 235 f., and finally by Bornstein, p. 95.

Of recent articles on the controversy I wish to point out in particular that of Poznański, *Ben Meir and the Origin of the Jewish Calendar*, *JQR.*, X (1897), 152-60, as well as the elaborate essays of Epstein (*REJ.*, XLII, 173-210, XLIV, 230-36, *Ha-Goren*, V, 118-42), and Bornstein, referred to repeatedly above

The account here given of the chronological order and identity of the documents on the Ben Meir controversy differs essentially in several points from that of the various authors mentioned, but upon a careful examination of the sources the reader will find this presentation justified.